

1842-0018

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 130 – 200 without prejudice to consideration in a continuing application, and add new claims 201-204 as set forth below. A complete listing of the claims and their status follows. This listing replaces and supercedes all prior claim listings.

Claims 1-97 (cancelled)

98. (previously added) A method for distracting in a given direction two tissue surfaces comprising consecutively introducing a plurality of elements in contact with each other between the tissue surfaces to distract such tissue surfaces generally in the given direction as elements are consecutively introduced.

99. (previously added) The method of claim 98 wherein said elements are introduced by moving at least one element to a different position upon introduction of a subsequent element.

100. (previously added) The method of claim 99 wherein said at least one element is moved by contacting a surface thereof with a surface of said subsequent element.

101. (previously added) The method of claim 100 wherein the introducing step includes the step of placing an elongated access channel in communication with a space between said tissue surfaces and introducing the elements through said channel.

102. (previously added) The method of claim 101, further including the step of providing a bone filler in contact with the elements.

103. (previously added) The method of claim 100 wherein said elements are wafers, said wafers being introduced between said tissue surfaces by stacking one wafer atop another wafer.

104. (previously added) The method of claim 98, wherein said elements are introduced by sliding one element along a surface of another element.

1842-0018

105. (previously added) The method of claim 98, further including the step of providing an outer member and introducing said elements into said member.

106. (previously added) The method of claim 98, wherein said elements have arcuate contact surfaces.

107. (previously added) The method of claim 98, wherein said elements have generally flat contact surfaces.

108. (previously added) The method of claim 98, wherein said tissue surfaces are superior and inferior surfaces of a damaged or diseased vertebral body in a spine, and wherein the elements are consecutively inserted into the vertebral body to distract said superior and inferior surfaces until the normal height of the vertebral body is substantially attained.

109. (previously added) The method of claim 98, wherein said tissue surfaces are superior and inferior endplate surfaces of opposing vertebral bodies in a spine, and wherein the elements are consecutively inserted between said vertebral bodies to distract said opposing superior and inferior endplate surfaces until stability of the vertebral bodies is substantially achieved.

110. (previously added) The method of claim 98, wherein said tissue surfaces are surfaces of a damaged or fractured tibia, and wherein the elements are consecutively inserted between the surfaces to distract such surfaces until the damage or fracture is substantially reduced.

111. (previously added) A method for supporting in a given direction two tissue surfaces comprising consecutively introducing between the tissue surfaces a plurality of elements in contact with each other generally in the given direction until said tissue surfaces are supported.

112. (previously added) The method of claim 111, wherein said elements are wafers configured for stacking one atop another.

1842-0018

113. (previously added) The method of claim 111, wherein said elements are introduced by moving at least one element to a different position in the given direction upon introduction of a subsequent element.

114. (previously added) The method of claim 113, wherein said elements are introduced by sliding one element along a surface of another element.

115. (previously added) The method of claim 111, further comprising the step of introducing a bone filler in contact with said plurality of elements.

116. (previously added) The method of claim 111, wherein said elements are introduced in a manner to simultaneously distract and support said tissue surfaces.

117. (previously added) An apparatus for the support of tissue surfaces in a given direction, comprising a plurality of elements in cooperative contact forming a structure between said tissue surfaces generally extending in the given direction, said elements being configured for consecutive receipt between said tissue surfaces to thereby form said structure as said elements are received.

118. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 117, wherein each element has an interface, the interfaces of elements in contact being configured to provide said cooperative contact.

119. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 118, wherein said interfaces are configured to provide unconstrained degrees of cooperative contact.

120. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 118, wherein said interfaces are configured to provide semi-constrained selective degrees of cooperative contact.

121. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 118, wherein said interfaces are configured to provide constrained degrees of cooperative contact.

1842-0018

122. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 118, wherein said interfaces are arcuate.

123. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 122, wherein said arcuate surfaces are generally cylindrical.

124. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 122, wherein said arcuate surfaces are generally spherical.

125. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 118, wherein said interfaces are generally flat.

126. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 125, wherein said structure is defined by a plurality of wafers each having said generally flat interfaces, one wafer being disposed atop another wafer to form said structure.

127. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 117, wherein said tissue surfaces are superior and inferior surfaces of a damaged or diseased vertebral body in a spine, and wherein said elements are configured for consecutive receipt into said vertebral body to form said structure between said superior and inferior surfaces of said vertebral body.

128. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 117, wherein said tissue surfaces are superior and inferior endplate surfaces of opposing vertebral bodies in a spine, and wherein said elements are configured for consecutive receipt between said vertebral bodies to form said structure between said superior and inferior endplate surfaces of said opposing vertebral bodies.

129. (previously added) The apparatus of claim 117, wherein said tissue surfaces are surfaces of a damaged or fractured tibia, and wherein said elements are configured for consecutive receipt between said surfaces to form said column between such surfaces.

Claims 130-200 (cancelled)

1842-0018

201. (new) The apparatus of claim 117 wherein each of said plurality of elements is a wafer having a length and a width and further wherein the wafer defining the bottom wafer in said structure has a length larger than at least one other wafer in said column.

202. (new) The apparatus of claim 117 wherein each of said plurality of elements is a wafer having a length and a width and further wherein the wafer defining the top wafer in said structure has a length larger than at least one other wafer in said column.

203. (new) The apparatus of claim 202 wherein said wafer defining said bottom wafer in said structure has a length larger than at least one other wafer in said column.

204. (new) The apparatus of claim 121, wherein said interfaces define complementary ridges and grooves.